

EDITORIAL

One of the problems caused by the preconceptions entertained by ufologists is that interesting cases are rarely investigated objectively. If the investigator favours the ETH as a possibility he will give up at a certain point and classify the case as possible evidence of it. He will also be tempted to suppress negative evidence, or alternative theories, as did those who gave evidence used in compiling the Sturrock Report. If the investigator is a sceptic he will lose interest as soon as he has satisfied himself that some explanation other than alien spacecraft will fit.

However, there are some cases where none of the explanations offered seem to make sense. I have discussed a few of them in this publication and have tried to indicate that the true explanations for them, whatever they may be, are likely to be somewhat complicated. In discussing the Walton case, for example, I pointed out that there were too many people directly involved for it to be reasonable simply to label it as a hoax and forget about it. Karl Pflock agreed with me on this point, but others were obsessed with possible motives, whilst ignoring the practical problems involved in organising and sustaining such an elaborate deception. I hope that readers will join me in attempting to pursue such questions further in future issues.

TITIUM AND ASTON'S CE3K

Martin Kottmeyer

On 18 November 1957 Cynthia Appleton, a housewife of Aston, England, encounters a tall fair man in a tight-fitting silvery garment with an Elizabethan collar. His hair runs to his shoulders and is cut in a pageboy style. She wonders where this character came from. He responds to her thoughts: 'From another world. Like yours, it is governed by the Sun. We have to visit your world to obtain something of which we are running short. It is at the bottom of the sea.' Her impression was that the name of the substance sounded like 'titium'.

Her husband, a metalworker, later suggests it was titanium and she defers to his opinion. Timothy Good, writing in *Alien Base*, indicates he has often thought it might have been a mispronounced reference to lithium, the lightest of metals. However, he also notes that Ellen Crystal has spoken to government agents who told her the aliens were mining beryllium, titanium and zirconium in the Pine Bush, New York area. Maybe Cynthia's husband got it right. (1)

Good doesn't wonder why the aliens would bother going to the bottom of the sea if they can mine titanium on the surface. One could perhaps say the same about lithium. Not that I've ever heard of lithium mining. It is disappointing neither could offer a more literalist reading involving nubile skin-divers or Atlantean mermaids. Um-um.

I write to propose an alternative. Titium is only one letter off from the substance known as tritium. It is an isotope of hydrogen. Hydrogen normally has one electron and one proton. Add one neutron and you get the isotope of hydrogen known as deuterium. Add two neutrons and you get tritium.

All three isotopes can combine with oxygen to form water. When the heavier isotopes combine with oxygen, the result is called heavy water. The existence of tritium and heavy water was common

knowledge in the period after the creation of the hydrogen bomb. Most people living in the Fifties heard of it sooner or later either in the context of the mechanics of the hydrogen bomb or in the presence of heavy water in nuclear reactors.

I don't know if heavy water would actually sink to the bottom of the sea or concentrate there, but the supposition flows so naturally out of the expression that Appleton would be justified in thinking that it would be the right place for aliens to look for it. That aliens would be looking for heavy water would be consistent with early UFO lore about saucers having atomic drives. On a broader level, dozens of alien encounters contain nuclear themes and that would also favour some sort of interpretation based on tritium.

I shouldn't have to add, but will, that I don't think Mrs Appleton misunderstood what she heard. The accounts I have seen sound like the encounter was a hallucination, most notably at the conclusion when the figure 'just wasn't there any more'. (2) Titium sounds like the sort of word play found in dreams, LSD states, etc. The sexualised phonic alchemy cutely joins nuclear power and woman power. Surely, even pageboy aliens in Elizabethan costumes would want it.

References

1. Good, Timothy. *Alien Base: The Evidence for Extraterrestrial Colonization of Earth*, Avon, 1998, 194, 207
2. INTCAT, case T79, *MUFOB New Series*, 12, Autumn 1978, 8-9

THE SPITHEAD UFOS

Nigel Watson and Granville Oldroyd

In response to one of our articles, Mr A. Calvert informed us that someone told him that in the early 1900s some UFOs were seen. Top ranking naval officers and VIPs were said to have observed these unidentified objects fly over a Royal Review of the Navy. On the Sunday after the sighting the family of Mr Calvert's friend discussed the subject at dinner. They thought that the objects were either illusions or spaceships. Mr Calvert thought that historical 'intelligence' files would have a record of this unearthly visitor, and he suspected it was purposefully suppressed because it would show that our Government was not unprepared for the UFOs that appeared from 1947 onwards.

Vague rumours like this often get circulated and inflated into exotic stories. However, the Naval Historical Library was able to tell us that from 16 to 20 July 1914 a review of the Fleet was made by King George V at Spithead. At the time the Admiralty announced that it was to test the efficiency of the reserve system, but it was really to organise the fleet in readiness for the forthcoming war.

This led to the discovery of the following report in *The Times* (London), Monday, 20 July 1914, page 10, column 1:

AERIAL EVOLUTIONS

On Friday night (17 July 1914), when the fleet looked exactly like miles of opaque pianola records with light shining through the holes, we heard a harsh buzzing and knew that somewhere 700 feet or 800 feet overhead someone was observing us. Something passed from end to end of the lines, turned, showing a bright light for a moment, and so went back the way it came. That was all, but it gave one a very uncomfortable feeling indeed. Yesterday I learned that it had been Flight Lieutenant J. L. Travers, who, accompanied by Flight Lieutenant Hyde-Thomson, had flown the 90 horse power Sopwith "Batboat" over from Calshot. He told me that he could have counted everything with great ease.

This extract from a longer report on the Royal Review of the Fleet at Spithead seems to be the origin of Mr Calvert's story, which just shows how memories of odd sights in the sky can stick in people's minds.

If we had not been able to find *The Times* report, the story of a spaceship visiting Spithead in full view of the Navy and royalty could have taken on a more exciting life of its own. This only makes us more alert to the fact that with stories of this type memories are easily distorted and twisted to suit our present-day prejudices.

LETTERS

On your website for 1-09-99, in your 'Saucers and Science: Where did it all go wrong?', from *Magonia* 65, November 1998, you asked if someone would look into the Hudson Valley sightings.

About ten years ago I investigated a number of reports near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, of formations of lights. I had, myself, seen one of these in twilight. I looked with binoculars and could see stars moving between the lights, so I knew this was not a single object. All I could think of was a formation of small planes, but I couldn't make them out, their movement was very slow, and I couldn't hear any noise. It was a puzzle, and I filed it away.

Later I learned that there was a group of ultra-light pilots flying out of a small nearby airport. I spoke to one who told me that they liked to fly formations and that he thought my sighting and another were probably them.

Some facts about ultra-light aircraft in the US:

1. They fly at less than 63 miles per hour. This is true airspeed, plus or *minus* the wind speed. Sometimes they appear to be (and are almost) 'hovering'.

2. The pilots and airplanes, many of which are homemade, are unlicensed, although they must fly under FAA rules.

3. The planes are too small and fly too slowly to show up on radar displays.

4. Since they usually fly from and return to the same small strip, they rarely, if ever, file flight plans, but fly under Visual Flight Rules.

5. They usually operate from small, sometimes isolated, rural grass strips, and not from airports.

6. They have lights for twilight flight, but are not *supposed* to fly at night.

7. Unless one is very close, or downwind, motor noises are often not heard. When they are, they sound like a little buzzing lawn-mower motor, which is about what they amount to.

Then warming up to his subject, this guy dropped the other shoe. He used to live in the NYC metro area in the early 1980s and he belonged to a flying club operating out of a small airfield at Stormville, NY. They called themselves 'The Martians'. The airport even offered a 'UFO burger' at its lunch counter. He said that they used to like to do formation flying and after being reported as UFOs, one thing led to another and they pretended to be UFOs. A photo of one of their formations was even in the *New York Times*.

In 1984 *Discovery* magazine did an expose in which it concluded that small planes were carrying strings of lights and using spots. My informant told me that some pilots did this, but the 'real Martians' were the ultralights. He said they used to try to co-ordinate lights with walkie-talkies, but discovered that if the leader turned his off, then everybody else, there was always one left and when it disappeared people would swear the thing 'zoomed away' and disappeared. 'If you want to see a flying saucer, you ought to see us flying in a circle with our spots on.' And then he roared with laughter, 'Now everybody's doing it'. He said they stopped because they were afraid of causing accidents, highways were backing up as thousands of commuters were stopping to watch them. I suspect FAA inquiries had something to do with it, too.

Do I believe this story? Yes, because I checked out his circumstances. Of course, this doesn't explain all of the Hudson Valley sightings, but once people start looking up to see UFOs, they start seeing them. The amount of night air traffic in the metro New York area is amazing, and the big airbase at Newburgh with huge transports, was also operating at full blast then, during the Reagan military build-up (A strategic force, the Army's 10th Mountain Division, used it when they needed transport from Fort Drum, NY).

The *Night Siege* book dismissed the small plane explanation with a couple of paragraphs. The reasons were lack of motor noises (yet there were some cited in their book), no radar contact, and no records of flights, all characteristics of ultra-lights. Since this was the principal sceptical explanation offered, I didn't think the dismissal in the book could be taken seriously.

Many Hudson Valley sightings recently reported could be classic reports of ultra-light formations. For example, in a recent magazine article, some were described as 'boomerangs', others as 'V' formations. While true distances cannot be judged unless one knows the size of the object or has references, the most-often given size was 100-300 feet, not far off from a formation of ultras. As to sound, about half the reports had motor noises or 'buzzing' (the witnesses were probably close or downwind), and about half had no motor noise (witnesses were probably upwind or far away). This suggests a geographic distribution of observers.

I have been very suspicious of these kinds of reports since these local sightings. In the early

90s there was a rash of them near Scranton, PA, which made the news on the wire services. A nearby astronomy club whose members I know operates an observatory. They told me that they could see these clowns taking off from a small abandoned airfield at night over a nearby mountain. The police also concluded this, and a local TV newsman found that some reports, once the flap got started, were also of Air National Guard C-130s flying in a long-established training path.

Two giveaways for V or boomerang formations is that they may have an uneven number of lights in each wing of the V, indicating an even number of planes (including the leader) or just a couple extra on one side. Also, these formations will exhibit the 'leader effect', as do flights of birds. That is, the leader will appear to travel straight, but the rest, who are guiding on him or each other, appear to drift around.

Robert R. Young, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

I shall not be replying to Karl Pflock, you will probably be relieved to hear, other than to say that a baseball average of .500 over three at-bats (i.e. 3 sightings) is not that great, although such an average over a whole season certainly would be.

You may have seen some hype on the Internet about some 'truly mind-blowing' new evidence to be shown at the recent Leeds *UFO Magazine* Conference during September 1999. It was billed as 'we now have the proof that every UFO researcher and enthusiast has been craving for'. As per the release: 'Carefully assembled over 3 years, this material comprises hundreds of video tapes, the source and contents of which will send shockwaves around the world'.

I have attended the conference and seen the said videos, or at least a portion thereof. Based on this viewing my conclusions are:

1. The contents are not mind-blowing.
2. The so-called 'proof' is non-existent.

3. There will be no shockwaves around the world, or even in the UK, as a result of this new UFO evidence.

The evidence consists of new film footage taken from a recent shuttle flight, or perhaps several such flights. The source is a mystery contact man in Canada, whose name, alas, is not to be published. Need I say more?

Christopher D. Allan, Stoke-on-Trent

Reference the recently proposed hypothesis that the nine 'UFOs' reported by pilot Kenneth Arnold may have been a flight of Canadian pelicans, I would now like to reveal 'The Truth' which I've kept 'under wraps' for more than 50 years.

Kenneth Arnold's UFOs were really giant homing pigeons, developed at great expense by the CIA to be able to carry longer messages than standard carrier pigeons. When it was discovered that their giant size greatly slowed their flying speed, the CIA decided to try strapping small rockets to their legs. With such rockets, the giant homing pigeons could fly at nearly 600 mph.

What Arnold saw was one of the early 'flight tests' of these giant rocket-propelled homing pigeons which had taken off from Area 51. Many of the triangular-shaped UFOs recently reported are these giant rocket-propelled homing pigeons. Regrettably, I am unable to reveal my source.

Slightly tongue-in-cheek,

Philip J. Klass, Washington D.C.

In the last *Supplement* I mentioned that *The Scareship Mystery* was going to be published in October 1999. Although the proofs of the text were checked and typeset, and a cover designed, the publisher cannot go ahead with it due to the recent slump in sales of 'fringe' material.

Research for this book was started in the late 1970s, and it was finally written and edited in book form by the late 1980s. Two publishers were quite keen on this project in the 1980s, but nothing happened. Until recently the book has 'rested' in my filing cabinet, and this time it looked as if it would finally escape into the world. Now it looks like it will go back to the cabinet in disgrace for another decade. Who needs MIB when market forces can bury such ufological treasures?

Nigel Watson, Plympton

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